

# Deschutes Provincial Advisory Committee

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## Meeting Minutes

**Date:** June 2, 2017

**Location:** Ponderosa Conference Room, Deschutes National Forest, Bend, OR

### **Attendees:**

John Allen  
Susan Skakel  
Monty Gregg  
Jerry Hubbard  
Teresa Kubo  
Stacey Forson

Beth Peer  
Chris Johnson  
Paul Anderson  
Lauren DuRocher  
Kevin Hopper

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### **Review of Pilot Project Areas**

**Green Ridge:** Monty Gregg, Wildlife Biologist at the Sisters Ranger District gave an overview of the project area. The project area lies totally within the Northwest Forest Plan and lies adjacent to private Ponderosa Land and Cattle property to southeast. There has been a lot of fire activity, and there is very interesting geology and hydrology. The area is a true mixed conifer landscape with multiple species of conifer and about 5 soil types mapped across the project area. Soil mapping can help provide the history of what was there before plantation were put in and can plant back to be more suitable for spotted owl habitat with mixed conifer. Proposed action will be based on the soil types and their productivity.

The area has a high road density; many roads were put in decades ago and were placed next to streams. The District has completed a travel analysis and there is a travel management proposal of about 30 miles of road closure or decommissioning, with intent of increasing core habitat size to be included in the proposed action. The assessment included looking at roads that would be needed for accessing the project area including thinning and prescribed fire. They also looked at the road system on the ground. Hydrologist and fish bios made the first cut looking at the road system and drainages and what is causing problems in terms of sediment, culvert replacements, etc. Some roads may be proposed for reclosing as some roads that were closed in the past are still being used. The LRMP road density standard does help support a target to aim at and keep the District moving forward on travel management. Any proposed closures are expected to have public comment: typically from the jeep groups and timber groups

There is only one trail that intersects this project, which begs the question – how ill the District deal with new trail proposals that are certain to come? John suggests they think about how a trail system would work here – maybe one or two routes through to the Metolius Basin. Overall, there have been some challenges with user created trails, but a close relationship with Sisters Trail Alliance there has been cooperation. When thinking of new trails, the district is looking at not just the impacts of the one trail but also thinking about the next step of thinking about the rec events happening in that location. Some questions to ponder in analysis: What would be the seasonality or intensity of use of the trail? Can we think about this with our decision making process during the NEPA process? What does a future trail look like in this area? How to give trail users the miles and experience they are seeking while keeping to areas less impactful? Recreation use is often daily, weekly and used almost year round. Roads in remote areas probably get used far less. Level 1 roads

may only get accessed every 20 years for project use. So understanding the impacts and differences between trails and roads is important.

Other information needed: Heat map? This maps showed areas that floated to the top that had a higher habitat quality for species. It was finished recently by the collaborative. Green ridge is not part of the CFLR area, but there has been some discussion.

Review of nearby wilderness trailheads and use levels and what that may be helpful to inform this process.

**Ochoco NF:** Stacey provided a map with several project areas in various stages of planning as options. Currently the Forest is in the process of looking at the 5 year outyear plan. This plan will look at restoration needs and economic viability. The PAC could help with implementation or help with a new project and developing a holistic approach. This could also involve working with the Ochoco collaborative. The Collaborative has been focusing more on the vegetation piece of the projects. The PAC could really dive into the road side of the project and can help bring recommendations that would bring a consistent approach across forests. PAC can look at developing broad recommendations and principles to look at for both forests.

Gap, HEJ, and Wolf have NEPA decisions and are in process of implementation. If PAC is interested in looking at how to move forward with implementation of the feasibility, types of closure, when/where to do hydrologically stabilize.

Current planning area is Black Mountain, it was just re-scoped with a more refined proposed action. It included higher number of road closure/decommission. Road closures get a strong reaction from the local public against closures.

Mill is just starting out with looking at proposed action and may be a good option for the group to review a project from the beginning.

Stacey also passed out a summary sheet with information about these projects.

John and the group would prefer to work on an area where getting in at ground level. Stacey just needs a heads up so the Forest can prepare information. When the full committee meets a decision can be made.

**BLM:** Travel management for BLM is focusing around the sage grouse corridors. There may be opportunities to collaborate through that effort. BLM needs to create initial look at unit level by September internally followed by a broader public process. Right of way and access while also looking at future use. Fluidity of future use around closures. Looking at the dynamic process of forest management and making sure you have the access you need and then futuring is difficult. Is there a BLM geography to add to this discussion?

**Cabin Butte:** Beth presented the basics on this project area which may begin planning in 2018. Project area is southeast of Bend (not far from the expanded Bend Urban Growth Boundary) and has the 18 Rd running through it. The project is adjacent to Rocket, which had 30+ miles of road closure in the decision. The area has also had a number of fire in or near it such as the 18 rd fire and the skeleton fire. Home were burned and/or threatened in these fires. The area has issues with illegal dumping and areas used for recreations shooting are getting trashed. Hazardous fuels reduction focus. There is a lot of human activity including trails for horses, hiking, biking that are available throughout the year because of lower elevation. Day use areas around caves. UGB expansion adding more potential users. What would we want this area to look like in 20 years? The use will grow and will change. Opportunities for improving wildlife habitat effectiveness with travel management planning. Sage grouse, big game, and bats.

Wildlife: The area contains some general habitat for Sage Group, winter range for mule deer, and cave management for bats.

Recreation: The area has some non-motorized system trails. They are currently listed with a primary use as horse but use has shifted in the past few years to more hiker/biker. Increasing use throughout the area and has illegal motorized trails.

The group can really think about what the area should look like in about 20 years. What does increasing use look like here and how can this project help address them.

**Other discussion:** To compare the role of the PAC with collaboratives – think of the PAC as developing a process/consistent approach with set of principles that can be applied in any landscape across the Deschutes basin; whereas collaboratives focus on more project-specific or site-specific issues and recommendations.

At this point it seems appropriate to have a subcommittee draft up a proposal for the PAC to define goals and outcomes of this project and help drive the group forward. John and Beth will provide an initial draft of a statement of work to describe this process and expected outcomes and timeframe (“scope of work”).